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Message Text

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20
ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 VO-03 SCA-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 SY-05 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06

PRS-01 SP-02 /063 W
---------- 116267
R 160715Z NOV 76
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5222
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
US MISSION GENEVA 333
US MISSION UN NEW YORK 805

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF, PINS, MY
SUBJECT: INDOCHINESE REFUGEE BOAT CASES: GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHER SEES VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AS POSSIBLE SECURITY THREAT

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 6578

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1. IN COURSE OF DISCUSSIONS WITH GOM OFFICIALS IN RECENT WEEKS

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WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT THEY ARE CONCERNED THAT FREQUENT ARRIVALS OF REFUGEE LADEN BOATS FROM INDOCHINA MIGHT BE USED AS COVER FOR EFFORTS TO SMUGGLE ARMS INTO MALAYSIA FOR LOCAL COMMUNIST INSURGENTS. CONCERN WAS PUBLICLY AIRED FOR FIRST TIME DURING PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON BUDGET NOV 9 WHEN A GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHER, LUKMAN KADIR (OF ULU NERUS CONSTITUENCY IN EAST COAST STATE OF TRENGGANU) URGED THE GOVT TO THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATE THE "REAL MOTIVES" OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES ARRIVING IN MALAYSIA TO ENSURE THAT THEY ARE NOT SECURITY RISKS. HE ASKED RHETORICALLY WHETHER THESE REFUGEES ACTUALLY WERE FLEEING THE COMMUNIST REGIME, NOTING THAT LARGE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES HAD CROSSED THE SOUTH CHINA SEA TO LAND ALONG THE MALAYSIAN EAST COAST, "THEREBY BRINGING A LOT OF PROBLEMS." HE INDICATED HE FOUND IT CURIOUS THE REFUGEES COULD MANAGE TO CROSS THE HIGH SEAS ON THEIR BOATS BUT ON ARRIVAL THE BOATS "WOULD SPRING LEAKS" SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO CONTINUE THEIR JOURNEYS.

2. COMMENT: IT IS UNCLEAR WHAT PROMPTED LUKMAN'S COMMENTS, ALTHOUGH THE THOUGHT MIGHT HAVE BEEN PLANTED BY REPORT FEATURED PROMINENTLY IN LOCAL PRESS SAME MORNING DATELINED BANGKOK NOV 8 THAT THAIS HAD TURNED AWAY BOAT CARRYING 67 VIETNAMESE REFUGEES, SUPPOSEDLY OUT OF FEAR BOATS MIGHT BE USED TO INFILTRATE COMMUNIST AGENTS (REPORT LATER PROVED ERRONEOUS, SEE BANGKOK 31210--NOTAL). AS NOTED IN PREVIOUS EMBASSY REPORTING, BULK OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES CURRENTLY IN MALAYSIA ARE LOCATED IN LUKMAN'S HOME STATE OF TRENGGANU. WHILE WE WOULD NOT RPT NOT RULE OUT POSSIBILITY LUKMAN WAS PUT UP TO SAYING SOMETHING ON THE RECORD THAT WOULD HELP RATIONALIZE HARD AND POSSIBLY TOUGHER LINE ON GRANTING TEMPORARY ASYLUM TO REFUGEES (ONLY THOSE ABOARD OBVIOUSLY UNSEAWORTHY VESSELS ARE ALLOWED TO LAND UNDER PREVAILING GOM POLICY), HIS REMARKS DO ECHO VIEWS EXPRESSED IN PRIVATE TO US BY MALAYSIAN POLICE AND SECURITY PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTRATION OF REFUGEES, AS WELL AS BY MFA OFFICIALS (REFTEL). FINALLY, HE MAY BE REPRESENTING GENUINE LOCAL CONCERN IN HIS CONSTITUENCY OVER PRESENCE OF REFUGEES AND CONTINUING ARRIVALS OF NEW BATCHES WITH ATTENDANT "PROBLEMS" THEY POSE FOR THIS ECONOMICALLY DEPRESSED STATE. ALTHOUGH LUKMAN IS NOT A MAJOR FIGURE, FACT THIS "SECURITY" CONCERN NOW HAS BEEN AIRED PUBLICLY IS NOTEWORTHY.
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